

Faith in the Home

Good Shepherd Sunday, John 10:1-11, "The Gospel Voice."

For congregations that follow the traditional three-year lectionary, the Fourth Sunday of Easter is Good Shepherd Sunday.

The imagery painted for us today by Jesus is beautifully simplistic. Jesus is the Good (superb or best can be translated from the Greek) Shepherd. We are His sheep. His sheep pen is His Kingdom. Jesus also says He is the "door to the sheep." This makes sense because Jesus, "Is the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He is the only way to God's Kingdom and salvation.

When Jesus shares these metaphors with His disciples it is in the context of the scribes and Pharisees who just kicked a recent follower of Jesus out of the synagogue. They wanted people to follow their voices. They were ensnared by their own pride, they were ensnared by Satan. Jesus uses them as the example of thieves who try to come into the sheep pen by ways other than the "door," or try to get in the presence of God without Jesus. Who gets led into the kingdom of God by why of the "sheep door?" His sheep, meaning those who put their faith in Jesus.

Sheep is a fitting metaphor for us. Sheep are not the smartest animals, and we can pretty thick-headed, and stiff-necked ourselves. Sheep are hardwired to follow other sheep. How often will we follow other people who do not have in mind for us the things of God? Sheep can bite the very hands of those who protect them and lead them to green pastures. Perfect imagery for our rebellious nature against God. There are many predators who would not mind feasting on a fat meaty sheep. We in this world have to understand that "Satan, prowls like a lion looking to devour us." We need God to protect us. Furthermore, our sin is stench towards God, and sheep can be stinky too.

Yet, a good shepherd worth his salt, will love their sheep despite all of this. When sheep know and trust a shepherd, they will follow their voice. (Shepherds can actually walk in front of their flock, instead of walking behind them and pushing them along.) Jesus calls each of us by name in our baptisms. His Word, the Bible is where we hear his voice. There are so many voices that will distract us, slow us down, out right lie to us, and sound pretty good, but only one voice forgives our sins, only one voice leads us to everlasting life. Jesus is the Good Shepherd He laid His life down for you, He took it back up, and He calls you by name into salvation.

How do we teach and model these things to our children?

1. Ever wish God would audibly speak to you? God reveals Himself to us through His Word and the sacraments. You can hear it through a faithful pastor who rightly distinguishes God's Law and Gospel. We also have access to God's Word in the Bible. With all the media we consume, it is crucial for us to make God's Word a priority.

2. Perhaps you have heard a testimony of a person who said God audibly spoke to them, maybe you have your own testimony of this. I won't deny that God can do that, but you need to know this: If you have a vision, dream, or hear a voice, if it tells you anything contrary to the Bible, it was not from God, period.

3. If your children see that God is a priority, they most likely, will make God a priority for them.

4. People don't have a problem with the idea of being loving and moral. The problem becomes who defines what is moral and what love is? It wouldn't shock me to have our denomination be labeled as a "hate group in our future." We counter popular culture in many ways. What we believe about abortion, homosexuality, marriage, and transgenderism (to name a few) is considered hateful by our culture. Remember the Devil is the prince of this world, but we don't bow to a mere prince who breathes out murderous lies. We worship the King of all creation, Jesus.

5. Finally, it is not easy to be disciples of Christ in this world. It will come at the very least with some social cost. The world beats down on us like 3-ton gorilla, Satan prowls like a lion for us, and are sinners. But we don't despair. Jesus is with us, and He will seek us out when we go astray. He who laid His life down for you, is preparing an eternal life of paradise for you. His voice is truth, life, and the Gospel. Only He will raise you from the dead.